

INFORMATION ABOUT:



The South Pass Segment of the Oregon/ Mormon Pioneer/California/Pony Express National Historic Trails

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

5353 Yellowstone Road
P.O. Box 1828
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82003-1828

Telephone 307-775-6256
Fax 307-775-6129

Published information dealing specifically with the South Pass segment of the Oregon/Mormon Pioneer/California/Pony Express National Historic Trails (NHT) is not available. However, this bulletin should answer many questions. The South Pass segment has special recognition because it contains many miles of well-preserved trail and numerous nationally-recognized historic sites. Nowhere else along the trails can one find this combination of well-preserved trail segments and historic sites in a setting that appears much as it did 150 years ago when the first emigrants passed through it.

The South Pass segment is 125 miles long. Of that, 82 miles are on federal and state-owned lands. The remaining 43 miles are on private lands. The federal, state, and private lands are intermingled throughout the segment's 125-mile length. While much of the NHT in Wyoming is undisturbed, some portions have been improved and are two-track or graded roads. Some portions of the NHT have been obliterated by highway construction. Overall, visible trail remains can be seen clearly throughout the entire length of the South Pass segment.

There are several ways to view the trail. The easiest is to view it from nearby highways. Three highways traverse the same general corridor that the South Pass segment follows. Highway 220 follows the trail corridor from Casper to Muddy Gap Junction, Highway 287 follows it from Muddy Gap to Sweetwater Station, and Highway 28 follows it over South Pass to Farson. In some places these highways cross the trail or follow it very closely. They pass near Independence Rock, Devils Gate, Split Rock, Ice Slough, and Pacific Springs, all of which are developed historic sites which contain interpretive information about the NHT. Portions of the actual trail are clearly visible from these sites. All provide vantage points from which to view the trail and the surrounding countryside.

For those with more time and interest in historic trails, detours from the highway can be taken on gravel public roads to view historic sites and trail segments. Public roads provide access to sites near Jeffrey City, Sweetwater Station, and South Pass. There are no signs directing people to the trail and related historical sites so knowledge of the trail is necessary.

The Hudson-Atlantic City Road offers an alternative to paved highways in retracing the South Pass segment. The road crosses Highway 287 six miles west of Sweetwater

Station and goes to Atlantic and South Pass Cities, small historic mining towns in the South Pass area. Take the road southwest at the sign of its junction with Highway 287. A seasonal road (June through October), it is maintained by the Bureau of Land Management and provides public access to large parcels of public lands in the area. At times the road is only a mile or so north of the Oregon Trail so there is a clear view of the country as seen through the eyes of a typical 19th-century emigrant. Portions of this road were in fact variations of the historic trails.

For those trail buffs who will settle for no less than to travel the trail itself, that opportunity is indeed available, but considerable planning and knowledge is required. To actually travel the trail, you must have an understanding of land ownership in the area and permission from the private landowner whenever travelling portions of the trails located on private lands. Also, there are limits to the type of vehicles that are appropriate. Some segments simply should not be driven on at all because they are very fragile and haven't had any vehicle traffic on them since the wagon days. BLM strongly recommends low impact use of the trail and related sites. Hiking or mountain biking is an excellent low-impact way to see and experience the trails. Remember, there are no facilities along the way. You must provide your own shelter and all of your supplies. Most of the trails are inaccessible during the winter months.

Land ownership status maps are available for \$4.00 from any BLM office in Wyoming. The standard BLM map is a 1:100,000-scale topographic map that shows land ownership status. The maps that cover the South Pass segment of the historic trails are: Farson, South Pass, Rattlesnake Hills, Lander, and Bairoil. Trail sightseers are encouraged to stop in at the Lander Field Office (1335 Main, Lander, Wyoming) or the Rawlins Field Office (1300 N. 3rd, Rawlins, Wyoming) for information on land ownership and recommendations about access to the trail.

When exploring the trails, you need to have an appropriate vehicle and equipment. Bad weather conditions are common any time of the year. Travel on the trails by commercial outfitters and large parties requires a permit from the BLM. While there are no developed public camping facilities along the trail, there are campgrounds located near Atlantic City about a mile from Highway 28. Camping on the public lands near the trails is allowed.

Remember that the public lands are used for many purposes including livestock grazing and mining. Please be careful not to interfere with these activities.

The BLM encourages everyone to visit the Oregon Trail — it is indeed a national treasure. Visiting the trail and related historical sites is a celebration of our American heritage. BLM urges you to travel the trail in a manner that leaves no trace of your activities so that others may enjoy it as you did.